



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Commission Meeting: July 10, 2008

Commissioners

Present

**Mario Acosta-Velez, Vice-Chair
Sonjiah Davis, Commissioner
Deborah Wood Dorsey, Commissioner
Christopher Dyer, Commissioner
Thomas Fulton, Commissioner
Pierpont Mobley, Commissioner
Nimesh M. Patel, Commissioner
Michael E. Ward, Commissioner**

For the Commission Staff

**Dianne Harris, Administrative Law Judge
Eli Bruch, Administrative Law Judge**

For the Office of Human Rights

**Gustavo Velasquez, Director
Alexis Taylor, General Counsel**

I. Call To Order

Vice-Chair Mario Acosta –Velez called the meeting to order at 6:45 P.M.

II. Roll Call/Announcement of Quorum

Administrative Law Judge D. Harris called the roll; a quorum was not present.

Vice-Chair Mario Acosta –Velez announced that he is not pursuing another term so this will be his last Commission meeting. He is pursuing other volunteer work in the city. He also announced that a member of the public had requested an opportunity to speak, but because it was not scheduled in advance, it will be postponed until the September meeting.

III. Approval of the Minutes

Minutes were not approved because quorum was not present.

IV. Director of the Office of Human Rights Report

Director Velasquez stated that the Mayor has nominated five individuals to the Commission, including a new Chair. These nominations will be fast tracked for confirmation. The City Council goes on recess and returns in September. Additionally, Commission Hearing Examiners are now officially categorized as Administrative Law Judges (ALJs).

The June docket for OHR was 257. Subtracting the 54 cases involving D.C. government and two on language access, the total is about 200 cases, with a backlog of 69. The year-to-date totals include three findings of Probable Cause and 276 cases closed. The Commission's docket will not change dramatically. Year-to-date settlements are about \$1.1 million, with a settlement rate of about 35%.

OHR has a strong push to get the Agency's name out in the community. This includes phone lines, website, outreach, and permitting the filing of complaints electronically. There have been almost 200 cases filed on-line this year. OHR's new Public Affairs Specialist has been hired and she has developed a PR strategy for the Agency, including language access "know your rights" and others. All D.C. government documents have to be translated at no cost.

OHR is also celebrating the 40th anniversary of Fair Housing Act. Action items are included in the packets provided to the Commissioners; provisions now include information on domestic violence. OHR is also enhancing EEO training, both live and web-based. The training is mandatory for all D.C. employees and is available to private sector employers. The training includes a test for comprehension. The Public Affairs Specialist is also working with the Mayor's office on GLBT Affairs regarding training. OHR is conducting training for the D.C. Office of Planning to train all 300 employees.

OHR has a new branding initiative to expose the uniqueness of the D.C. Human Rights Act, which is broader than most others and goes beyond employment and housing. OHR is also preparing the bi-Annual report which will use desktop publishing and will involve the Commission.

Commissioner Wood Dorsey inquired about the budget for the Fair Housing initiative and related action items. Director Velasquez responded that much of the funds came from HUD with a total budget of approximately \$200,000-250,000. There is also an 11 minute video on fair housing prepared by HUD which will also be sent to all ANC's.

V. Commission on Human Rights Report

Commissioner Dyer suggested to move this discussion to the end of the agenda given that members of the public were present for the meeting.

VI. Report on Capital Pride Day Community Outreach Event

Vice Chair Acosta-Velez thanked the Commissioners and OHR staff for attending and helping to staff the OHR/Commission booth. He again noted that Capital Pride Day was voted the best festival in DC by the *CityPaper*. ALJ Harris also stated that the event turned out very well and appreciated everyone's involvement.

Vice Chair Acosta-Velez inquired as to how OHR and the Commission can measure success of such events, for example, how many people stopped by and how many requested follow-up. Commissioner Davis also stated that OHR and the Commission need a large frontal banner to enhance visibility. Director Velásquez noted that there is a large display, but it is placed behind the table and thus a sometimes harder to see. Commissioner Patel suggested that a table skirt with the Agency and Commission logos might be good. ALJ Harris also noted that they were able to help residents on a few particular matters. Commissioner Davis noted that there is an African American GLBT Pride Day that also gets a good turnout.

VII. Report from the District Of Columbia Commission on Human Rights Rulemaking and Legislative Drafting Committee

OHR General Counsel A. Taylor stated that the revisions to the regulations are coming along well. Four members of the Commission are involved; Commissioners D. Wood Dorsey, N. Patel, M. Ward, and S. Davis, but all are welcome. She also mentioned that the proposed revisions to the regulations regarding gender identity are going out for notice and comment tomorrow. Additionally, Chapters 2-4 pertain to Commission business and operations. Of those, revisions to Chapter 3 have been completed. The subgroup is now shifting to Chapter 5, which pertains jointly to OHR and the Commission. Commissioner Ward noted that Chapter 3 needs to be approved by the full Commission and will be discussed at a future Commission meeting.

VIII. Status of Chief Administrative Law Judge Position

Director Velasquez stated that the position was posted on June 17 and also listed with other sources, such as the *Legal Times* and the websites of the Top 150 law schools. The response has been pretty good. D.C. Human Resources will provide a list of the candidates who meet the position qualifications, at least five so far. OHR will then assist in scheduling interviews. The interviews will include Wayne Mukulski, Deputy Attorney General; Kim McDaniels, Diversity Manager for the Office of the Attorney General, and Joan Davenport, ALJ in the D.C. office of Administrative Hearings. The position will remain open until filled. Once there is a certified list of candidates, the announcement will be pulled. The position is listed as Management Service, thus it is not a term appointment.

IX. Old Business

None.

X. New Business

Commissioner Patel suggested that the Commission adopt the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the theme of the 2008 Human Rights Day. A consensus of the Commissioners was reached, but given that quorum was not present, a formal vote was delayed to the September Commission meeting.

Director Velasquez added that a component of the United Nations had contacted D.C. Public Schools to teach a segment on human rights, related to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR. DC and other cities were selected as cities for human rights learning. The plan includes coordinating with the Commission, other governmental bodies, and schools to create program of learning about human rights. The first meeting will be next week to discuss responsibilities of all parties. The Mayor plans to personally launch this initiative. Members of the Commission are welcome to assist.

XI. Commission on Human Rights Report (continued from earlier)

Regarding the Commission's docket, ALJ Harris stated that five cases are approaching final resolution. Given that members of the public were present, the cases were identified as numbers 6, 10, 11, 14, and 21 on the written report provided by ALJ Harris.

ALJ Harris also noted that at the start of year, the Commission had ten very aged cases and that number has been brought down to seven.

XII. Announcements

None.

XII Adjournment

Commissioner C. Dyer moved to adjourn and Commissioner S. Davis seconded, upon voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nimesh M. Patel
Secretary